

## Examination of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029)

### MF14 – Statement on Policy SS6 – New Housing in the Countryside (criterion e)

- 1.1 At the hearing session on 13 October, the Inspector raised concerns about criterion (e) in light of the discussions held, and asked the council to consider whether any amendments were required. In particular he raised concerns about how the criterion fitted with the requirement to comply with neighbourhood plans (in criterion (g)), and questioned whether the approach was supported by national policy and guidance.
- 1.2 The policy is criteria based and sets out the circumstances when residential development proposals will be permitted beyond settlement policy boundaries.

Criterion e (as submitted) states:

Development proposals for new housing outside of Settlement Policy Boundaries will only be permitted where they are:

- e) Residential proposals that have the support of the local parish council/town councils/parish meetings, provided that:
  - ix) They do not result in an isolated form of development;
  - x) The scale is appropriate to the site and location;
  - xi) The development will respect the local environment and amenities of neighbouring properties; and
  - xii) The development is well related to the existing settlement; or...

- 1.3 The NPPF sets out that LPAs should ‘enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities’ (NPPF para 54). The purpose of criterion e) (as submitted) was to provide additional flexibility in the Plan by allowing new residential development in rural areas (outside of defined settlement policy boundaries) where they would be suitable in terms of location, scale, form and impact, as required by criteria ix) – xii). The proposed approach, which is considered to reflect the spirit of the NPPF in enabling suitable rural development to meet needs, also sought to recognise the role of local communities in considering the suitability of relevant proposals.
- 1.4 However, the council acknowledges, upon further consideration, that the criterion’s reliance on the support of parish and town councils to ascertain suitability is not reflected in national policy/guidance and would therefore lead to issues of soundness, as indicated by the Inspector. The national policy/guidance position perhaps reflects how it may be difficult to quantify whether a proposal does or does not have the relevant support in light of the fact that such bodies may not have a unified view. The council therefore accepts it is necessary to make some changes to this part of the policy.

- 1.5 The council still considers that a degree of flexibility to provide dwellings in the rural areas is appropriate to allow settlements to grow in a sustainable manner. Such an approach would be in line with para 54 of the NPPF, which recognises that LPAs should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs for all types of housing.
- 1.6 It is therefore proposed that criterion e) should be amended to allow small-scale developments where they would meet a locally-identified need. Small scale developments would be defined as those that would deliver four net new homes or fewer. This threshold would ensure that the criterion would not conflict with the role of neighbourhood plans which can allocate sites for five or more dwellings in rural areas. The requirement for proposals to be 'of a scale and type that meet locally-identified need' would retain the need for input from Parish Councils/Town Councils etc in relation to whether the number, size and mix of such dwellings would be appropriate.
- 1.7 The policy also draws out some of the key considerations that would inform the acceptability of such schemes. Whilst it is recognised that the Plan would need to be read as a whole, these criteria highlight areas of specific importance, such as the need for developments to respect the character of the local landscape and the surrounding built form.
- 1.8 It is therefore proposed that the policy and its supporting text is amended, as set out below.

Text in red shows changes previously proposed.

Text in purple shows further changes proposed by MF14.

### **Policy SS6 – New Housing in the Countryside**

Development proposals for new housing outside of Settlement Policy Boundaries will only be permitted where they are:

- a) On 'previously developed land', provided that:
  - ix) They do not result in an isolated form of development; and
  - x) The site is not of high environmental value; and
  - xi) The proposed use and scale of development is appropriate to the site's context; or
- b) For a rural exception site for affordable housing; or
- c) For the re-use of a redundant or disused permanent building provided that the proposal:
  - xii) Does not require substantial rebuilding, extension or alteration; and
  - xiii) Does not result in the requirement for another building to fulfil the function of the building being converted; and
  - xiv) Leads to an enhancement to the immediate setting; or

- d) For a replacement dwelling that is not temporary in nature, or an extension to an existing dwelling provided that:
  - xv) The size of the proposal would be appropriate to the plot; and
  - xvi) It would not be significantly visually intrusive in the landscape; or
- e) Small scale<sup>1</sup> residential proposals of a scale and type that meet a locally agreed need have the support of the local parish council/town councils/parish meetings, provided that:
  - xvii) It is well related to the existing settlement and would They do not result in an isolated form of development; and
  - xviii) The development will respect the qualities of the local landscape and be sympathetic to its character and visual quality; and
  - xix) The development will respect and relate to the character, form and appearance of surrounding development, and respect the amenities of the residents of neighbouring properties; or
  - xx) The development will respect the local environment and amenities of neighbouring properties; and
  - xxi) The development is well related to the existing settlement; or
- f) For a new dwelling linked to an existing and viable agricultural, forestry, horse breeding and training, livery or equivalent rural business, where it can be shown that:
  - xxii) There is an essential need for the occupant to be on site at any time during any 24 hour period; and
  - xxiii) No alternative suitable accommodation is available in the locality; and
  - xxiv) The rural business linked to the proposed new building must have been viable for the previous three years; or
- g) Allocated for development in a Neighbourhood Plan which has been 'made' by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

- 1.1 This policy applies to the countryside, i.e. areas outside defined Settlement Policy Boundaries which are not allocated for development in the Local Plan.
- 1.2 The aim of the Local Plan is to direct development to within the identified Settlement Policy Boundaries and specific site allocations. Within the countryside it is the intention to maintain the existing open nature of the borough's countryside, prevent the coalescence of settlements and resist the encroachment of development into rural areas. The countryside is therefore subject to a more restrictive policy.
- 1.3 However, the Local Plan recognises that the borough's rural areas include a large number of smaller settlements which vary in size and function, in addition to a variety of rural enterprises. As such, the policy incorporates sufficient flexibility to support the provision of new homes where they will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and meet identified needs. The policy will prevent isolated homes in the countryside.

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<sup>1</sup> Four dwellings or fewer (net)

- 1.4 The redevelopment of previously developed land in the countryside will generally be encouraged provided that the site is not of high environmental value and that the proposed use and scale of development is appropriate to the site's context.
- 1.5 Buildings constructed of temporary or short-life materials, and which are derelict and in an advanced state of disrepair, are not considered suitable for re-use. A structural survey of the building to be converted may be necessary.
- 1.6 The council recognises that existing buildings within the countryside may be subject to proposals to replace them. However, this is limited to those which are not temporary in nature or the result of a temporary permission. The impact of a replacement dwelling is likely to increase with its size, especially in relation to the impact on its surroundings and being out of scale with its plot.
- 1.7 A replacement dwelling should be positioned within the site where it would result in no material harm, including to the local landscape or amenity.
- 1.8 The size and design of the proposal should respect the existing building and not result in the property becoming more visually intrusive in the countryside. The council will consider the size of the proposal compared with the existing building, the size of the resultant building and whether it would be out of scale with its plot. The cumulative impact of incremental extensions can significantly alter the impact of the original building over time. In considering an application for an extension, account will be taken of previous extensions to the building.
- 1.9 The policy allows small-scale new residential development in the countryside in limited circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that it would meet a local need, as agreed in consultation with the parish/town council (for example, in relation to dwelling size and type). Such developments should be four dwellings or fewer (net) to fall below the size threshold of sites that could be allocated through neighbourhood plans. It will be necessary for such developments to be well related to existing settlements and be suitably designed to respect the landscape setting and relate well to surrounding development.
- 1.10 There may be instances where it is necessary for a new dwelling to be built in the countryside to meet the need for a worker to be accommodated on site, such as for an agricultural, forestry, horse breeding and training, livery or equivalent use. In general, given that the borough's characteristics are such that most agricultural and other countryside-based enterprises are reasonably accessible to settlements, the council will require applicants to demonstrate that the need cannot be met through (for example) call out or the provision of casual overnight accommodation rather than a full time residence. The removal of agricultural ties to dwellings in the countryside will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the business linked to the dwelling has ceased to exist or that the business has permanently changed its operation which no longer requires the linked dwelling.